

SYLLABUS
POL 572
Seminar in Comparative Politics
University Center Room 220
Monday Nights 6-8:50
Prof. Robert E. Biles
Spring 2008

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course will cover the major concerns of comparative politics with particular focus on four areas (covered below) and the relation of comparative politics to the larger concerns of political science. Emphasis will be on student responsibility for leading and participating in class discussions; improving research, writing, and presentation skills; and familiarizing students with the major comparative literature. The seminar will involve some lecture by the professor but will rely primarily on student discussion, student presentations, and student leadership of discussion. The grade is upon writing (80%) and the quality of class participation. Credit: 3 hours. Prerequisites: Graduate standing.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES: As a result of the course, students should have:

- Improved skills in analysis
- Improved skills in research and writing
- Improved speaking and teaching skills
- Improved group skills
- A grasp of the major areas of comparative politics
- A deeper knowledge of selected areas of comparative politics
- Knowledge of the major literature in comparative politics

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: None. But look for an intro to comparative politics and read it through during the course of the semester. See the reading list. It will help in the class discussions and fill in some gaps.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Descriptive Book Review**
This is a description of the major themes and ideas of the book, including a brief description of its methodology. A list of books will be provided. A complete citation of the book and the insertion of page numbers into the text (for quotations, paraphrasing, etc.) are required.
- **Analytical Book Review**
Provide a brief description of the major contribution of the book and analyze some of its major themes. (You won't be able to do all of them.) Analysis covers a multitude of sins. You need to do something that shows your ability to work with the material: where it fits into the discipline in terms of such things as approach, school of thought, new ground it breaks, answering an old question, raising new questions; problems or strengths; or its application to something else. A complete citation of the book and the insertion of page numbers into the text (for quotations, paraphrasing, etc.) are required.
- **Concept Paper** (also to be taught)

Write a paper on an aspect of comparative politics of interest to you and of importance to one of the four areas we will explore. This can be an idea, approach, method, or paradigm (whatever that is) such as democratic transition, political culture, origin/nature of revolution, or consociational democracy. You will also teach this to the class. A works cited section and citation in the text are required. Cite **at least eight sources**.

- **Literature Review**

Choose a research question that is within the realm of comparative politics and examine the research that has been done on the question or that leads up to research you would like to do. The concept paper involves a broader topic that is to be explained and described. The literature review, by contrast, starts with a much narrower question and examines what the findings are on the issue. You need to cite research literature, particularly professional journals for this paper. A works cited section and citation in the text are required. Cite **at least ten sources**.

- **Team teach section.**

Four teams of 3-4 members each will teach a lesson. Each team will be responsible for one of the four areas you selected: Democracy/Authoritarianism; Protest, Violence, Civil War, and Revolution; Ethnic/Communal Group Politics; and Gender Politics. The team will decide how the topic is to be handled and who will do what. Include some discussion by the class. Not everyone in the group has to speak, though all may. Each member of the team will provide me a grade and explanation of the grade for the other teammates. The grade should be based on their contribution to the group's preparation and presentation.

PAPERS: Please **consult with me** on the topics for the Concept Paper and the Lit Review. A list of suggested books will be provided for the two book reviews. You will review two different books. For more depth, review one or two books in the area you will teach. For breadth, review books dealing with other areas. Please do NOT review a book that was a text for a class you took or a book you reviewed for another class. (Doing so will be considered academic dishonesty and subject you to the nuclear option.) Use citations and a works cited page for all papers. For the reviews, you only need the entry (complete and in correct style) for the works cited and page numbers in the text. Sources for the concept and lit review papers must use academic sources – such as articles, books, and data sets. Do not use blogs, news stories, general encyclopedias, Wikipedia, and the like. Please use the MLA or Turabian styles. (Turabian is the guide for theses and capstone papers.) Papers may be **revised** and resubmitted. This is optional, not required. Revisions are **due** three weeks after the original is returned to you. The final grade on a paper is the one that will count. A little over half **the grade** will be based on the content, the rest on the writing. Do not plagiarize. An electronic copy must be submitted to Tunitin.com, a plagiarism checker, and placed on Blackboard for your classmates to have. Provide a hard copy to me.

GRADES: Each paper is worth 1/5 of your grade. Class presentations and participation will make up an additional 1/5.

ATTENDANCE, MISSED WORK, PARTICIPATION, & COMPORTMENT:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually, to respect others, to read the assignments, to participate in class discussions, and to contribute to a good learning environment.

- Proactive, quality participation should be the norm in class. If you are particularly shy, you may not intervene as much, but you must force yourself to speak up on occasion. Your thoughts are valued. Of course, academics can disagree, even strongly, in a civil fashion.
- Students are expected to be at all classes in order to participate and learn from your colleagues. Valid reasons for absences will be accepted. While there is not a formal attendance grade, unexcused absences will adversely affect the participation grade. Students should inform me before absences if possible or if not, afterwards as to the reason for the absence. Missing when you are scheduled to present is particularly bad form and should only happen for very good reason.
- **Excused absences include** official active participation in university functions, illness of yourself or someone for whom you are a primary caregiver, attendance at a funeral, religious holy days, and occasional work emergencies. I will consider other reasons in the spirit of the above.
- *Turn off cell phones, pagers, etc. before class begins.*
- For additional information, see <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: The University and I disapprove of cheating on exams, papers, or other assignments. Those engaged in dishonest practices will be submitted to university disciplinary action. In addition, cheating will produce a zero on the assignment and will be part of the course grade. **Plagiarism** is a particular problem. It is wrong, immoral, and against the rules. Don't do it! In writing a paper, cite the source of any ideas, facts, phraseology, etc. that is not very common knowledge. **If you paraphrase** something (that is, take the ideas or information from a source but put it in your own words), cite the source. When you are learning, it is better to sin on the side of too many citations than too few. **If you use someone else's words, put them in quotation marks** and provide a citation of where you found the material. This includes material from web sites, books, articles, interviews – **any** source that is not your very own words. A common form of plagiarism is using material patched together from websites. Buying or using someone else's paper is plagiarism of the worst kind.

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY: Holy day absences are treated like other excused absences. Provide me documentation of the absence before or after the absence and arrange to make up any missed work within two weeks of the absence.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. **NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center**

CONTACTING THE PROF: Office AB1 315H, phone (936) 294-1460, e-mail gov_reb@shsu.edu, fax 936-294-4172. Enter the political science suite through 315 or 315K.

Office hours: T-days, 10-10:30, 4-5; M-days, 11:30-12:30, 4-5. I plan to be in the prof's room just above our classroom from **5-6 on Mondays**, where students are welcome. I am happy to stay after class as long as you need to talk. **Classes:** TuTh 11 & 12:30; Mon. night at the UCtr. Please do not come to see me in the five minutes just before class, when I am getting ready to teach. Any other time I am in, you are most welcome. Conferences by **appointment or drop-in, after class, or by phone**. I am available most of each day, and students are **not limited to office hours**. Come see me as soon as you need help; the end of the semester is generally too late.

Information will be posted on Blackboard (Course Information section) accompanied by emails and if necessary Electronic Reserve. Students can use Blackboard to communicate among themselves.

SCHEDULE

Jan. 28 – Intro & Admin

Feb. 4-11 – Presentations of comparison of US and ____.

Feb. 18 – Comparative Politics – An Intro -- prof

Feb. 25 – Descriptive Paper due; traditional concerns -- prof

Mar. 3 – Democracy/Authoritarianism – Team taught

Mar. 17 -- Analytical Paper due; newer concerns -- prof

Mar. 24 – Violence, etc. – Team taught

Mar. 31 – Politics of ethnicity– Team taught

Ap. 7 – Concept Paper due; problems of analysis -- prof

Ap. 14 – Present Concept Papers (20 minutes each; will lap over to next class)

Ap. 21 – Politics of gender – Team taught

Ap. 28 – Lit Review due; student teams to review themes and problem areas

May 5 – Pulling things together -- prof

May 12 – Final Scheduled